



# A qualitative research on the problems faced by physical education teachers working with individuals with autism

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the problems experienced by physical education teachers working with individuals with autism in the field of work and during the working process, with their own experiences and expressions. Knowing that the answers to be given by entering the inner world of the individual with a phenomenological method are relative, the individual with special needs and the difficulties he encounters, as well as the ways of coping with these difficulties and solution suggestions are discussed. The research was carried out with the voluntary participation of 5 physical education teachers working with private individuals. In this research, a qualitative research method and semi-structured interview technique were used. It includes descriptive-content analysis and interpretation of the data obtained with the interview form. Categories were created for each question. Responses were analyzed in 4 categories. In this process, it has been tried to determine the role of factors such as the problems experienced or faced by physical education teachers, the difficulties and the ways of struggling with them, the functioning of the course, the size of the field and material, the environment, family, institutions and economics in this process.

**Keywords:** Autism, disability, physical education

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## 1. Introduction

The term autism was coined by child psychiatrist Leo Kanner in 1943. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a special group that draws attention with its increasing prevalence rates in the world and in our country, and it is among the most common developmental disorders today. Autism spectrum disorder is seen in all racial and ethnic groups in the world, but although there is no definite information about its frequency, it is stated that it has increased over the years (Aydin and Ozgen, 2019). The use of many

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terms to describe the autism spectrum causes confusion. Whereas, mental ability, motor skill and language development are part of the same species with differences.the introduction. Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental difference that is congenital or occurs in the first years of life and is also called "developmental disorder" because it affects the development of individuals. Although it is not known exactly what causes autism spectrum disorder, which is caused by various nervous system problems that affect the structure and functioning of the brain, it is thought to have a genetic background. In individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder; Problems in feeding, rotating objects, tantrums, repetitive movements, intense concentration, inability to go out of habits, sensitivity to sound and light, and obsession with certain areas are observed (Alver & Gumus, 2020). The most common term used for the autism spectrum is "fan". While one end of the spectrum (autism spectrum) is used for the mildest symptoms of autism, the other end is used to define the most severe symptoms (Yilmaz, 2018).

Again, Autism Spectrum Disorder is manifested by persistent inadequacies in social, communication and interaction, limited/repetitive behaviors, insistence on sameness, adherence to routines, and hypersensitivity or insensitivity to affective stimuli. It is defined as an ongoing developmental disability. (Gici-Vatansever, 2018).

Although individuals with autism develop at the same rate as individuals with normal development, this situation changes over time. Although there is no physical problem restricting movement in individuals with autism, development may regress or even stop. Individuals with autism should receive special education from the moment they are diagnosed. Because the education started after early diagnosis can be life saving for the child and family (Gici Vatansever, 2018; Sekeroglu, 2018).

In recent years, the increase in the number of children with autism spectrum disorder in the world and in our country has made it necessary to increase the awareness level of the society on this issue worldwide and to develop action plans for countries on this issue. With the recognition of ASD in the society, it contributes to the early diagnosis process and starting appropriate education in the early period is of great importance in terms of minimizing the disease process and the problems that may be encountered in the future (Aydin and Ozgen, 2019).

Therefore, Physical Education and Sports are very important in order to support motor development, improve social life in a positive way, cope with stress and improve self-confidence in individuals with autism (Temel, Yildiz, Turan, Karaoglu, 2017).

Many scientific studies (Lander et al. 2016, Wen and Wang, 2019, Orhan, 2019) have revealed the importance of physical education activities. Physical education activities enable the person to know his body, to gain self-respect, to respect his body and to know

its value. In addition, it is seen that there are many positive contributions to being physically and mentally healthy, being active in the social field, and helping and solidarity roles. In addition to making individuals with special needs feel healthier and fitter, sports activities are also beneficial for their physical health in their current and future ages. With sports and physical activities, stress, anxiety and depression levels and behavioral problems are minimized. Becomes less depressed and less aggressive. With psychological recovery, his academic journey becomes safer. This effect of sports is a part of ASD treatment.

Scientifically based studies on how physical education and sports courses and programs have a strong effect on individuals with special needs (Savucu, 2019, Ugras, 2019, Coates and Vickerman, 2013, Doulkeridou et al. 2011, Columna et al. 2014, Wilson and Lieberman 2003) appear. Considering the long-term goals for the activities to be done in children with special education needs; It aimed to develop positive self-concept, social competence, development in motor skills, physical and motor fitness, leisure time skills, tension relief, game skills and creative expressions in disabled individuals. These targets developed for Physical Education are of great value because they include all areas of development. It can be thought that Physical Education programs that will be prepared considering these goals will provide many developmental benefits (Yildiz, 2011).

As a result, the aim of this study is to determine the problems experienced by physical education teachers working with individuals with autism in the field of work and during the working process, with their own experiences and expressions, and to reveal and examine these problems.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Purpose of the research*

The purpose of the study is to investigate the problems faced by physical education teachers working with individuals with autism.

### *2.2. Research Group and Design*

This research was conducted with a qualitative method and the Phenomenology approach was used to understand the experiences correctly. Phenomenology focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have a detailed and deep understanding of. We can encounter these phenomena in different ways in our daily lives, which appear in different ways such as events, experiences, perceptions or situations. However, this does not mean that we fully understand the facts in question. Therefore, phenomenology is used for studies that aim to investigate the phenomena that we encounter frequently on a daily basis, that are not foreign to us but that we cannot fully comprehend and constitute a suitable research ground (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016).

The study group determined in line with the purpose of the research consists of physical education teachers who work with individuals with autism and graduated from sports science faculties of universities or physical education and sports college. The determined research group (K=5) was formed by using the criterion sampling method. The research was carried out with the voluntary participation of 5 physical education teachers.

### *2.3. Data Collection Tools*

In this study, data were obtained by using semi-structured interview technique, one of the interview techniques. Interview is a data collection technique that is frequently preferred in qualitative research and is used to conduct in-depth research to reveal social reality. Collecting data face-to-face with the interviewees is a factor that increases the depth of the research (Yuksel, 2020). The purpose of using the semi-structured interview technique is to obtain in-depth information, and the questions to be flexible and prepared in advance.

Questions were prepared in accordance with the semi-structured interview technique. The depth and directness of the questions were checked with the semi-structured interview technique. The questions are aimed to be flexible. First, a literature review was made and the questions were prepared accordingly. After the questions were prepared, they were presented to the experts for their opinions. In the interviews held with the faculty member at Pamukkale University Faculty of Sport Sciences and the faculty member at Pamukkale University Faculty of Education Special Education Department, information was given about the purpose and importance of the research and questions were presented. Questions that were not guiding or not suitable for the purpose of the research were removed. Questions in line with the purpose of the research were added after expert opinion. After the opinions of two experts, the interview questions were updated.

In addition, before the interview, the participants were given detailed information about the research and asked if they wanted to participate in the study, and those who wanted to participate voluntarily were interviewed. The choice of answering questions and withdrawing completely belonged to the participant, and the interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with 2 participants and online with 3 participants. It was recorded with a voice recorder or video conference system in line with the permission of the participants. In cases where permission could not be obtained, notes were kept and recorded. Transcripts were checked by the participants to ensure the reliability of the data.

### *2.4. Analysis of Data*

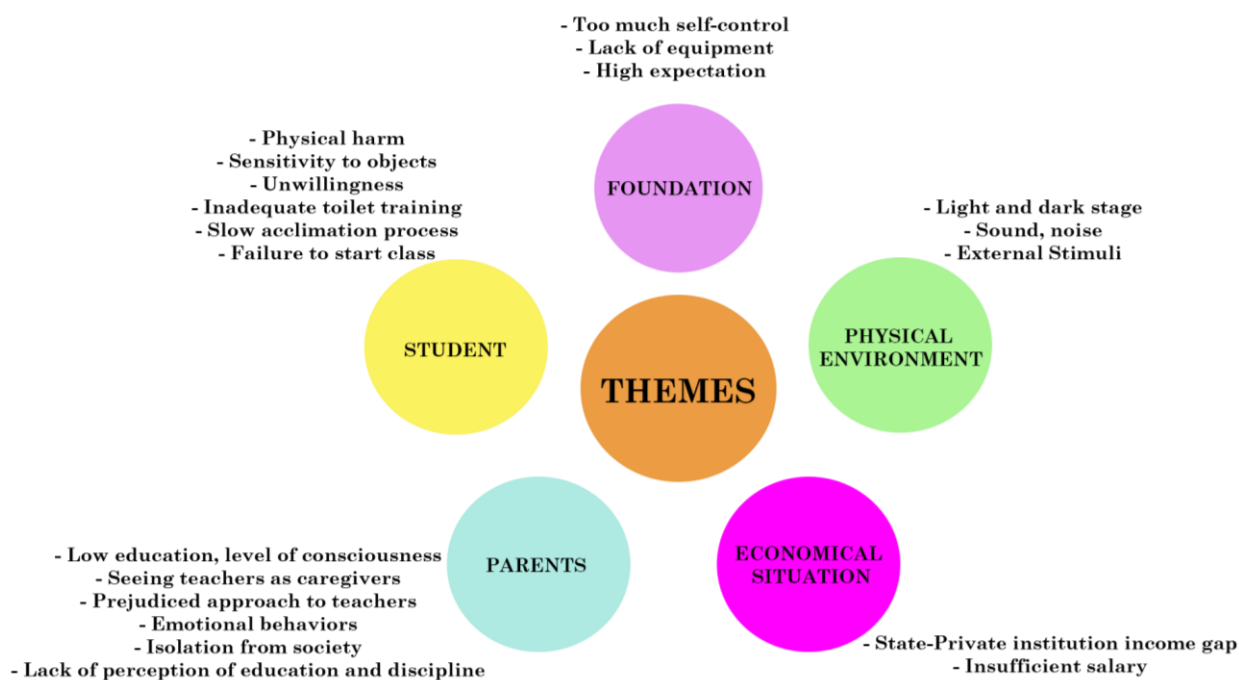
Descriptive content analysis was used as the analysis method. Voice recorder, video and face-to-face interviews were written in MS Word. Codes and themes were created as a

result of content analysis. In the qualitative research process, the data obtained in the interview technique were analyzed by casting them into the tables. It is divided into categories based on similarity and importance. Prominent answers were transferred to tables in detail. All answers are detailed in order to ensure that the research reaches more reliable data. A distribution chart was created for the answers given to the questions.

### 3. Results

This section includes the breakdown, analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the interviews. The answers to the questions are categorized and interpreted in the tables below. The answers of each participant are divided into categories as an answer to the question asked. In order to present the validity of the findings at the maximum level, the answers of the participants are included in the tables without any comments. Participants were coded as (K1, C2, P3, P4, P5).

*Table 3.1. Qualitative Findings, Themes and Codes*



### **3.2. In your opinion, what should be the basic characteristics of teachers who will give physical education lessons to individuals with ASD?**

K1: “For once, it is necessary to be very patient. You must love children too. I mean, first of all, patience and love”.

K2: “You need to improve yourself, I have been in practice a lot. I got information from other sources. I did my master's on special children, there is no end to the knowledge”.

K3: “They should value their athletes rather than coming from within the sport, success should be as valuable as failure, especially in mentally handicapped athletes”.

K4: “It should be open to development and improvement”.

While some of the participants expressed the view that emotions such as patience, compassion, self-sacrifice and love should be the basic characteristics of physical education teachers working with ASD individuals, other participants expressed the view that individual abilities such as experience, equipment, quality, and self-development should be the basic characteristics of physical education teachers.

### **3.3. What do you think should be done for teachers to have their students practice physical education successfully?**

K1: “He must have sufficient material, first of all, he must have sufficient material for the teacher, and if there is no material, the most suitable conditions must be created to provide the material. Of course, space and environmental conditions are also very important.”

K2: “Training area should be suitable for students structurally, it should contain many things from smart board to fitness equipment”.

K5: “Before group lessons, you should give individual training to each child, including team sports. This is all about getting to know the child. Does he have a sensitivity to a sound, how does he react in the crowd? For example, you will practice long jump in athletics, is the child prepared?, how does he/she react to the sound?, how does it continue?”

K5: “First of all, we produce large evaluation reports of children in a sedentary state who have never played sports, and we evaluate the physical and motor development of the child. We provide training according to the results of the tests, which include all of the basic sports skills that the child needs most, such as jumping, jumping, picking, throwing, holding, catching and balance. Then, according to the observations of the instructors, we carry out activities for the children to acquire branches. For example, if the child's catching skills are very good, we direct him to table tennis.”

Participants stated that in a successful physical education practice, it is very important to have adequate materials as well as suitable environment and conditions for education,

show-and-take, and one-to-one training accompanied by visual materials and scientific resources, and that they should receive individual training before group training.

**3.4. Do you have any expectations from individuals and institutions? Can you explain your expectations, if any?**

K3: "I wish that the trainings we receive are provided with appropriate seminars every month and every year in addition to this and continue repeatedly because instead of staying at a certain education level, we should discover new formats, new modules, maybe we can create modules that are not".

K5: "We are experiencing really big problems in terms of reintegrating our children into society.

The participants stated that teachers who specialize in their fields through training and seminars should be in these institutions and that they should not use physical activity as a source of money, that they should be supported by the state, and that they expect to increase the opportunities in terms of materials and fields.

**3.5. What do you think are the main features of a good school/institution for physical education lessons for ASD individuals?**

K1: "It should be completely student-oriented, there should be no shortage of materials. It should be good as a place".

K2: "The training area should be suitable for the student structurally. It should contain many things from the smart board to the fitness equipment".

K3: "First of all, experience is very important to us".

K4: "It should provide quality education with experienced, well-equipped teachers. A good education cannot be given only with trainee teachers".

Participants stated that the main features of an institution or school are that it is equipped with materials such as smart boards, fitness equipment, a field suitable for the student, and a qualified, well-equipped, experienced educator.

**3.6. Do you have problems with the physical environment where you take your lessons? If yes, can you give an example?**

K1: "...a child with autism can be distracted by the slightest stimulus from outside during the study, even if it is his own mother".

K2: "Students are affected by factors such as light and darkness, so problems may arise".

K3: "They are affected by the sound, especially the sounds coming from outside. I would say that they are more distracted by extraneous sounds from outside than light".

K4: "Noise, loud sound, especially horn sounds cause problems".

K5: “We know that our special children are 6 times more sensitive to external sounds than ordinary people. In other words, they use their affective aspects more”... “For example, we are currently in the season pass. All of our children experience nervous breakdowns and laughing fits. We observe that their behavior problems increase and their movements are uncontrollable. Right now, it's all about the change of seasons”.

Participants stated that environmental factors such as sound, light and noise are problems related to the physical environment. Problems such as lack of facilities, lack of space are other problems related to the social area.

### **3.6.1. Where are physical education classes/physical activity held?**

K3: “The most suitable gymnasium is for special individuals. They are prevented from being damaged, thanks to the cushioned walls. There are cushions on the floors, of course, being protected is an extra advantage”.

K5: “We do it according to what the physical conditions are suitable at that moment. Since children can change at any time, we cannot do it uniformly. For example, we have athletics training right now, my daughter has been the first in Turkey for 6 years. If his psychology that day is really at a level that can't handle an open field air, crowd, and noise, I take that day's training in the forest, lift weights, take him to places where no one is. So, as I said, there is no uniform workspace for us. We create a workspace for ourselves according to whatever is appropriate for the child's physical and psychological conditions of that day”.

Participants stated that they do their physical activities in individual classes reserved for special students, in sports centers such as dance halls, gymnastics or gymnasiums, in open areas with natural life such as parks and gardens, and in environments suitable for psychological and physical conditions.

### **3.6.2. Are your students affected by factors such as sound, light and noise in the lesson?**

All of the participants stated that their students were affected by environmental factors such as sound, light, indoor environment, and noise.

### **3.6.3. Can you evaluate the adequacy of the materials and materials you use in the lessons?**

K1: “At first, we were providing our own materials and trying to work with children with autism, trying to create more specific materials. I used a lot of material, I had enough material for my work”.

K2: “Our materials were not enough, we had a shortage of suitable materials for each student. Sometimes I would make the materials myself”.

K3: “I teach with toilet paper rolls when necessary, tools are not always at hand or we have to create a little out of nothing for aerobic activities. Sometimes we teach with



bottles for a little more variety, because the material prices are high, we can't always reach them”.

K5: “I am a good club economically for my own club. We have most of the materials and supplies we need, and are able to reach more. The materials are purely visual, this is the instructor's job, actually, I can build 20 kinds of tracks from the cat ladder. It is the educator's job to diversify the materials and to produce them where they are not. It's about the instructor's visual perception, liking his job, working and self-development”.

Some of the participants stated that they do not have enough materials, that they sometimes produce new materials with the means at hand and use them according to their needs, that they do not have enough materials for aerobic activity and that they have problems in the functioning of the lesson. Some of the participants stated that they did not have any problems with the materials since they were teaching in a school or institution with good facilities.

### **3.7. Do you have problems with OSB students? Answer: If yes, what kind of problems do you have?**

K1: “It is very important that the autistic child gets to know you and loves you, which requires some time and effort. Of course, there were times when I was hit, dropped, pushed and pulled.”

K3: “You are a bit lucky if you are the first teacher, but if you are the second and third teacher you know later, you need to get used to it a little bit. Also, if the number is high, it can be a bit of a hassle, of course, the process is getting longer for you”.

K3: “They are shy in front of the male teacher. For example, in sports that require close contact, such as gymnastics, there may be a little more difficulty. They think that the male teacher will be angry with him, of course, we can destroy that in time”.

K5: “They can cause extreme harm to the environment, themselves and you during nervous breakdowns and tantrums. During my teaching life, there have been dozens of other accidents like this, with 6 brain traumas, two stitches, tooth marks I forgot the number of”.

Participants stated that they had problems during the first meeting with their students and during the first lesson, they needed a certain time to get used to the next teacher after getting used to the first teacher, problems arise when the student is very sensitive to external stimuli, and when you cannot approach well according to his emotional state, and they encounter harmful behavior problems as a result of tantrums.

**3.7.1. What do you think is the biggest problem you have experienced in this process? Can you explain?**

They stated that parents' interference in lessons, being indifferent, lack of cooperation, treating teachers more like caregivers than teachers, and children's indifference and reluctance towards the lesson, and the sexist approach of male teachers in gymnastics classes are the biggest problems teachers experience.

**3.8. Do you participate in social activities with your student? Answer: If yes, what kind of activities do you participate in?**

Two of the participants stated that they did not participate in any social activities with their students, and the other participants participated in sports activities such as competitions, camping, swimming, nature walks, excursions, vacations, as well as musical activities such as cinema, music, choreography, theater, on special days such as autism awareness day.

**3.9. What are your thoughts on the families of students with special needs?**

K2: “They are in a constant movement like how much progress has been made”. “They expect their newbies to be the best”.

K1: “They have a very difficult life in very difficult conditions, they can experience great difficulties. Since the culture and education level of children with autism and their families are generally low, they may be weak in bringing education and teachers in parallel”.

K1: They are very worried that their children will be hurt and upset at the beginning, but it is also very important for the child to accept authority, but later on, as they get to know you and accept you into their lives, on the contrary, they look you in the eye with extreme gratitude”.

K3: “They want them to be successful in basic movements, this makes them very happy. They do not expect much success in sports anyway, their main aim is sociality. After making them do the basic exercises, the student leaves very happy, the parents leave happy”.

K5: “Unfortunately, their children are not wanted in schools and kindergartens. The family is also aware that other children's education areas are restricted. Maybe that kid can sabotage that lesson, maybe ordinary kids can do that too. Maybe that child may not take that lesson at that hour, but when an autistic friend tries to calm him down during a nervous breakdown, calms his anger and directs him to something else entirely, the child's problem-solving skills improve throughout his life.

K5: “Unfortunately, there is no education when families perceive their children's situations too emotionally. Discipline may not be perceived by families too much, families are very emotional, our work sometimes stays on the ground, we try to solve those

conscientious problems... let's say the child does not eat. We recommend that the family not eat the things they love from outside and consume what is at home. Because the family doesn't eat, they go and buy the things they want and feed them. We cannot solve this, they are a kind of behavioral problem"...“I can say that they actually pity children under the name of parenthood. We can only work in parallel with 40% of families”.

K5: “Families have high expectations from us. If you have done well, they expect more from you. I taught a student who never spoke to speak after a certain period of time. Then the family of an 18-year-old boy who has never spoken is waiting for you to make him talk. The best thing I do is I don't make promises to families, I tell them what they can't do, and I never sell them hope. Never talk to the family about what the child can achieve until you have at least 3-4 months before starting work for the children. The demands of the families are really high and their expectations are very high. Private education is paid, you know, they want everything to be perfect when they give the money”.

The participants stated that the families are ignorant about autism, the living conditions are very difficult, they try to do the best for their children's education in these difficult conditions, the difficult education processes, the social and academic education levels of the children of the families with good economic status are also good, and the effect of the economy on socialization and development is high. have expressed.

### **3.9.1. Do families have expectations from you? If so, can you sample?**

The participants said that families have high expectations from teachers about their children's development in a short time, social development and sportive success, success in basic movements, but most importantly, the perception of sociability is among the high expectations. Participants also stated that families have high expectations due to the promises made by institutions to families.

### **3.10. Have you had any problems with the management of the school/institution you work for? What kind of problem or problems, if any, did you encounter?**

K1: “...Since special education schools are institutions that require self-control, one can feel under extreme pressure, of course, there are windows open, cameras all around you are under constant surveillance”.

K4: “Families have high expectations from us because the institutions we work with have too many promises”...“We had a problem because they made too many promises to the family and had too much expectation from the teacher. They are hope dealers, the family believes it and expects too much from you”.

The participants stated that the lack of materials, self-control in institutions or schools, and excessive hopes and promises given to the family create a great stress and pressure on the teacher, and therefore they have problems with the institutions they work.

### **3.11. Can you evaluate the economic situation of teachers working with individuals with special needs?**

K3: “Unfortunately, our economic power is low, no matter what branch we work in, we can hardly earn even the minimum wage, even if we take additional courses. There is never a sufficient figure in terms of financial income. Most of us work spiritually, not materially. His right is not that money... I can say that I only get pocket money economically”.

K4: “The tuition fees that the institutions give us over the fee they receive are low, we are struggling economically, the fee we receive is not satisfactory. We find it difficult to live on the salary we receive”.

K5: “Since I work in my own workplace, special education is an expensive type of education. I am very comfortable financially right now. I set the fees myself. Teachers are paid more than other teachers. The wages of a beginner 3-5-year teacher and a 15-year teacher are not the same, they have a price and they work accordingly. When that price is determined and the family sees the development in the child, it is not a problem for anyone.”

Three of the participants stated that their economic situation was better than other teachers, they had better opportunities, two of the participants stated that their economic situation was insufficient, the course fees were insufficient, and they had difficulty in living.

#### **3.11.1. Does working with these individuals make you economically comfortable? Can you explain?**

Three of the participants stated that the fees they receive are higher than the other teachers, and that the individual tuition fees are more economically than the group courses. Both of the participants stated that the wages they receive are low, they teach in a spiritual comfort, and that some institutions reflect low tuition fees from the high tuition fees they receive.

#### **3.11.2. Do you consider your salary sufficient? Why?**

While two of the participants stated that the salaries they received were sufficient and appropriate, three of the participants stated that the salaries they received were insufficient and they could not get along due to their high living conditions.

### **3.12. Do you think that the education you received at the undergraduate level is sufficient in working with individuals with special needs? Why?**

K2: “The course we take in one semester is not enough, there are deficiencies in the application, the internships are very insufficient, more applications should be made and more should go to the field”.

K3: “I do not find the education I have received sufficient. Instead of some elective courses, we could have taken different courses that are a little more necessary for us, it was a waste of time”.

K5: “I'm telling you, teacher, everything that we asked what was needed in school appeared one by one in our working life and in my social life. All of them are important, they all have a value. You take it in the material development course of educational games, the basis of it is given at school, then you build on it. You are preparing a child for a competition, you need to know statistics very well. I didn't mind that statistics course, it was very difficult. If I had my current logic, I would have taken the classes of other classes. I wish I could use them much more efficiently in my time. I am particularly pleased with the anatomy course. We see so many benefits in this business right now. So you can't do this job without knowing anatomy. A child has more than one problem. In this case, if you do not know the child's discomfort and do not know what training to give him, you cannot work, you can injure the child”.

All of the participants stated that the training they received on disabled individuals at the undergraduate level was insufficient and that the teacher should develop himself and gain experience in addition to these trainings.

### **3.12.1. Do you consider the training you have received sufficient? Why?**

K1: “I received ABA education model training with the special dedication and support of our manager. I received the training of trainers in a new education system implemented all over the world on individuals with autism in special education, of course the special support of the institution on this issue was very meaningful”.

K2: “There are also people with Down syndrome among the mentally handicapped, the trainings helped me to distinguish between autism and how I should treat them”.

K4: “Some techniques and some trainings are not given at the university. ...I gained experience and learned techniques, I tried to improve myself besides the education I received at the university”.

K5: “I was in constant training, I was in constant research, I was practicing a lot. Because every child I work with is a very important source of information gain for me. I worked with the children for no money throughout my university life and this situation added a lot to me”.

All of the participants stated that in addition to the training they received in this field, they reached a sufficient level by improving themselves by experiencing and applying other resources, some modules and techniques, and that the training they received was sufficient for them at this level and they still need to constantly improve themselves.

### **3.12.2. Has the training you received been beneficial in your professional life? Can you sample?**

All of the participants stated that the training they received was very useful in the stages of getting to know individuals, distinguishing, teaching, meeting and getting close.

## **4. Discussion and Conclusions**

The findings will be discussed under 4 topics in this section.

- A discussion on the problems experienced by physical education teachers with families.
- Discussing the economic inadequacies and working conditions of physical education teachers
- Discussing the effects of material adequacy, facilities and physical environment on the course
- Discussion on the training, professional competence and self-development of physical education teachers

### **4.1. A Discussion on the Problems Physical Education Teachers Experience with Families**

Participants stated that most of their students had problems with their families, and this had a negative effect on them. Difficulty of living conditions, socioeconomic status, ignorance and ignorance about autism, unrealistic high expectations, promises of some institutions and organizations to them and being impatient are stated as the problems experienced by physical education teachers with families.

Education should not be limited to just teachers and students. During the transfer period of education and training to the home, parents should fulfill their duties. A permanent behavioral change and a good education and training process can be improved more with the cooperation of the teacher and the family, with active participation and division of labor.

In their study, Alberta and Learning (2003) concluded that the most frequently expressed problem about the families of students with autism was that they did not have knowledge about autism and were uninterested. Developing and implementing meaningful and effective educational programs for students with autism requires cooperation with the family (Alberta, Learning, 2003; cited in Akcin et al., 2014).

During the education period, teachers should cooperate with the family. Families should participate in the training provided, not only in the school, but also at home (Erdoğan and Demirkasimoğlu, 2010).

### **4.2. Discussing the Economic Insufficiencies and Working Conditions of Physical Education Teachers**

The majority of the participants stated that their working conditions were not good, they acted with moral feelings, they could not get along, the tuition fees paid by the institutions were low, their salaries were not satisfactory and they had various

economic problems, they should be supported by the state and their economic conditions should be improved.

In parallel with these data, in the "A Study on the Problems Encountered by Physical Education Teachers", which was conducted using the example of Kayseri province, it was revealed that physical education teachers had insufficient class hours and their earnings were insufficient financially (Hakyemez, 2010). In the study of Anlagan 2021 on the negativities experienced by physical education teachers who provide movement training to individuals with autism, 50% of the participants found the work areas and materials sufficient, while the other 50% found them insufficient. The participants stated that the classrooms were inadequate, that the children should be in touch with nature in larger areas, and that these children were not accepted in the social area and were excluded.

In a situation where sports and physical activity are so important for individuals with autism, physical education teachers should be supported, their economic competencies should be ensured and working conditions should be improved. The presence of teachers with good working conditions will also have a positive effect on the education process of these children.

#### **4.3. Discussing the effects of material adequacy, facilities and physical environment on the course**

Participants mostly stated that their materials and equipment were insufficient, and that the facilities or the classes they used were not according to the level of the students. In addition, they stated that the classrooms were insufficient against external stimuli such as sound, noise, and light, and these situations caused problems in their lessons. Two of the attendees asked for materials, facilities, etc. They stated that they did not have any problems in any subject and that they worked in a fully equipped public school.

The obsessive behaviors and distractions of the autistic individual require the creation of special areas for these individuals. When we look at the environments of children with autism, activities in nature should be preferred more than activities done in the classroom, since they affect the child more emotionally. Palko and Lynch (2009) stated in their study that children should be in larger areas and more individualized. It is very important to organize the areas where individuals with autism will receive education. An environment that will not disturb the individual should be created. This situation is very important on learning (Palko & Lynch, 2009; cited in Akçin et al., 2014).

In a study conducted by Fein and Dun (2007) by taking the opinions of teachers working in the autism center about the problems, it was seen that the classrooms prepared for the education of special children were not in the necessary conditions and were classified without considering the competencies of the students (Fein and Dunn, 2007; cited in Cakici, 2020). These disruptions in education and training cause negative feedback. The individual diagnosed with autism should receive support with

an individualized education program from the moment he is diagnosed, and the necessary tools should be provided.

#### **4.4. Discussion on the training, professional competence and self-development of physical education teachers**

All of the participants stated that the education they received at the undergraduate level was insufficient. They stated that they can reach a sufficient level by learning from scientific sources, internships or techniques in addition to their undergraduate education and by constantly improving themselves. Here, the inadequacy of academic education given at the undergraduate level related to the disabled is mentioned. A physical education teacher who does not receive adequate training and cannot gain sufficient experience in internships may encounter many problems in the field when he/she enters the practice. They stated that the courses and hours of teachers at the undergraduate level should be increased and internships should be more. They stated that they should support them with different training models and seminars.

In the study conducted by Anlagan 2021 on the negative experiences of physical education teachers who provide movement training to individuals with autism, 75% of the participants stated that they found their undergraduate education insufficient, they did not receive training in this field, and those who received training stated that they learned by experience when they started to work. 25% of the participants who found the undergraduate education sufficient stated that the courses they took were sufficient to work in this field.

In the study conducted by Nalbant and Izgar (2018), the owners of the institution stated that physical education teachers have professional inadequacies in the field of special education and that this should be included in the departments they study, and they stated that physical education teachers working in this field have difficulties.

In another study on the problems faced by physical educators working with disabled individuals with the example of Ankara province, it was concluded that physical education teachers do not have sufficient knowledge to work with disabled students and the education given at universities is insufficient (Usta, 2010).

Although teachers' academic qualifications, professional knowledge, field knowledge, and general culture are very important in the education they will provide, they are not sufficient when it comes to individuals who need special education. Being technically equipped teachers who understand individuals in need of special education, empathize with them, know the characteristics of these individuals and know their families, and have good personality traits are among the competencies required in the education of individuals with special education needs (Akbal, 2016).

In the study of Akcin et al. (2014), physical conditions restrict the movements of students, placing students in classes regardless of their performance level makes teaching activities difficult, teacher characteristics are not sufficient to work with children with autism, the education program is not suitable for working with children



with autism, the preparation of individualized education programs is not known, and the lack of materials during implementation. they said it happened.

Based on the findings of this study, when we look at the family approach of teachers; It is seen that there are a wide variety of problems and that it is primarily a communication problem. The family's mental state, economic concerns, autism rejection-acceptance relationship, insistent and high expectations put great pressure on the teacher. This situation both creates an effect on the teacher's motivation and course functioning and causes pressure on the child.

It is seen that the majority of the answers given by the participants about tools, equipment, facilities and physical environment are about inadequacies. Many situations such as the lack of sufficient materials and areas, the limited and restrictive existing areas, being under the influence of the physical environment, the difficulties in teaching lessons and the inability of the state to produce an economic resource here have resulted in various problems on the individual and the teacher.

Again, most of the participants stated that their financial means were insufficient. Here, insufficient course fees and not being supported economically are seen as the cause of financial difficulties. In addition to acting with voluntary and spiritual feelings in the motivation of working with individuals with autism, when the financial results are considered, very few of them are satisfied with the wages.

Another result of the research is that the academic education received by the teachers in working with these children is insufficient. It was concluded that the students could not do enough internship and practice, and the resources were limited. Those working in this field have improved themselves through various trainings and worked in different institutions or organizations to gain experience. It was determined that when physical education, sports, and exercises applied to individuals with mental disabilities at a trainable level systematically and regularly, provided positive and significant improvements on their bio motor properties (Bastik et al., 2021).

As a result of this situation, in our country, it can be said that research is needed to compare the levels of sports activity of individuals participating in the sports activity program, teachers, parental opinions and people in other disability groups with people diagnosed with ASD. In this context, it is expected that individuals diagnosed with ASD will be useful to people who conduct research on their sports activities (Gumusdag et al., 2022).

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